



Update: Ongoing Inquiry into Melioidosis Illness at Tulane National Research Center

Late November 2014, two non-human primates in the breeding colony at the Tulane National Primate Research Center (TNPRC), a private research facility, became ill. In mid- December 2014, samples submitted to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identified *Burkholderia Pseudomallei* as the causative agent. This strain of bacteria is not endemic in the US but was the subject of research at TNPRC. Because *Burkholderia Pseudomallei* is a tier 1 agent and the material was considered not in containment, the CDC and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) initiated a joint investigation of TNPRC in January 2015. As part of the investigation conducted January 20-24, federal and state scientists visited the TNPRC site to conduct epidemiological study and to review lab practices to determine possible route of transmission.

The CDC, USDA and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), are working with Tulane University as well as state and local officials to identify, isolate, mitigate and prevent further transmission of *BURKHOLDERIA PSEUDOMALLEI* within TNPRC. Environmental testing, including air, water and soil sampling, have been negative to this point.

Situational Update: Wednesday, April 1st, 2015, as of 2pm CST:

CDC:

- CDC and USDA officials continue to work with the Tulane National Primate Research Center on its plan to address deficiencies identified by federal inspectors following the release of *Burkholderia pseudomallei* from the secure laboratory and subsequent suspension of select agent and toxin research. New protections will include more intensive training and oversight along with a "shower-out" procedure upon leaving the lab so that an organism cannot come out on skin or clothing due to a breach in infection control practices.

-CDC officials are monitoring test results from the monkeys and are confident at this time that monkeys were infected in a veterinary clinic at the primate center.

-All results to date indicate to officials that the bacteria release has not posed a risk to the health of Tulane primate center employees or the surrounding community.

EPA

EPA is working with LDEQ, the state regulatory agency, to review water outfall and sediment sampling plans proposed by Tulane.

Tulane:

- No people are sick or infected with *Burkholderia pseudomallei*.
- More than 675 monkeys have been tested so far and six have been affected, including three that have been euthanized.
- None of the sick animals were outside in the breeding corrals while they were sick.
- It is most likely that each of the sick animals was exposed to the bacteria in the primate center's veterinary hospital in one specific clinic. After they were diagnosed with the bacteria they never left the hospital.
- That clinic has been decontaminated twice since it was found to be the source of the bacteria that sickened the monkeys.
- Every soil, air and water sample tested by EPA and CDC is negative for the bacteria.
- CDC has indicated that there is no evidence to date to suggest the organisms was released into the environment.
- Wildlife testing on primate center grounds is ongoing and to date each animal tested (44) has been negative. This includes feral cats, rats, opossum and raccoons.

USDA:

- The USDA continues to support LDAF in their work to monitor animal health, and with LDAF with the wildlife testing plan. We are working with TNPRC to develop a long term testing and management plan for the primate colony. We very much appreciate the opportunity to work with the State and participate in the public meeting to help address the attendee's concerns.

Louisiana DHH:

DHH will continue monitoring any possible human exposures with necessary blood testing. We will continue working with Unified Command to assure mitigation of disease.

*****State agencies and St. Tammany Parish are in the process of developing both short and long range monitoring plans to be carried out by Tulane and the federal agencies involved in the oversight of this private facility.*****

Melioidosis, also called Whitmore's disease, is an infectious disease that can infect humans or animals and is treatable with antibiotics. The disease is caused by the bacterium *Burkholderia pseudomallei*. It is predominately a disease of tropical climates, especially in Southeast Asia and northern Australia where it is widespread. The bacteria causing melioidosis are found in contaminated water and soil. It is spread to humans and animals through direct contact with the contaminated source. It is not known to spread from human to human or from animal to human.

CDC's role is to protect the health and safety of researchers and the public. For more information about melioidosis, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/melioidosis/index.html>. Questions regarding the investigation and remediation activities should be directed to CDC (Jason McDonald) at 404-387-3660. Questions regarding the TPNRC facility should be directed to Tulane (Mike Strecker) at 504-512-1347. All other questions or concerns should be directed to Mike Steele at Mike.Steele@La.gov.

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